



BLACK ROCK FOREST

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David Redden Conservation Science Fund Small Grants Program for Conservation Research at Black Rock Forest

Guidelines for 2024

Application Deadline:
January 29, 2024 5:00 PM EST

Announcement of Awards:
March 15, 2024

Earliest Start Date for Funded Projects:
April 1, 2024

INFORMATION CONTACT:

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BLACK ROCK FOREST DAVID REDDEN CONSERVATION SCIENCE FUND SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM 2024 GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

Black Rock Forest (BRF) is a non-profit organization with a mission of advancing scientific understanding of the natural world through research, education, and conservation programs. BRF maintains 70-km of roads and trails within our 1,586-ha forest within the Hudson Highlands providing access to a variety of terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

The David Redden Conservation Science Fund Small Grants Program (herein: “Redden Fund”) seeks to support research projects at Black Rock Forest focused on science with applications to conservation. Research can be focused at any biological scale - molecules to ecosystems. **Projects must be completed, at least in part, within Black Rock Forest.** The maximum request is \$6000 with a one-year grant period.

At Black Rock Forest we value diversity in our ecosystems and in our organization. We are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workplace and in our science, education, and conservation. We strongly encourage applications from underrepresented group members as we seek to diversify and strengthen our organization, science, and society.

ELIGIBILITY

- Projects must involve research related to the biota or physical environment of Black Rock Forest and must be completed, at least in part, within BRF.
- Projects must have a clearly stated application to conservation or forest management.
- Proposals are welcomed from high school, undergraduate, or graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and senior researchers at any academic, research, non-profit, or other institution for higher learning.
- Previous Redden Fund awardees are eligible to reapply only if all requirements detailed in their previous award letter have been met.
- To maximize the diversity of research and applicants, no project will be awarded more than three grants within five years of the first award.

RESEARCH AREAS OF INTEREST

Proposals in all areas related to conservation science will be accepted. Proposals that facilitate active participation of underrepresented peoples are especially encouraged; those that claim to do so must have explicit mention and a plan for how they will do so.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Proposals must be prepared by at least one PI that will serve as the primary contact, will receive and administer finances, submit reports, and will be responsible for all communications related to the project. Proposals with more than one PI must designate the “primary responsible agent”.

- Proposals from students (i.e., graduate, undergraduate, and high school students) must be written with expressed written support from their advisor. An advisor must be a professional and able to provide support to the student and their proposed research plan; e.g., a science teacher, faculty, or professional researcher. All students must have their advisor submit a letter of support stating support for the student and research.
- The PI, not their institution, submits the proposal.
- Grant awards are made directly to the PI. The PI should inquire within their home institution for guidance on handling small grants early to avoid award delays.
- The grant period is one year. All proposals should be constructed to reflect a one-year project. Start dates can vary but funds are typically available within 2 weeks of announcement (~ April 1). Projects are eligible for an award up to three times within five years of their first award.
- If a PI has previously received a Redden Fund Grant, all previous requirements (see previous award letter) must be met before any new grant is awarded.
- The maximum request is \$6000.
- Award funds may be used for stipends or salary (but not benefits) to support students, research assistants, post-doctoral associates, subcontractors, and/or faculty.
- Travel expenses to and from Black Rock Forest are allowed. Faculty and students should arrange their own transportation to/from and within the Forest. Food expenses are not covered. Lodging costs at Black Rock Forest facilities may be included (check our [website](#) for fees and availability).
- Indirect costs or other forms of institutional overhead are not allowed.
- Unless otherwise stipulated in the award letter, equipment purchased will remain at or be returned to Black Rock Forest at the end of the grant period.
- All awarded proposals will be required to acknowledge and accept the BRF Research Code and Guidelines available on our website and will accompany the award letter.

DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted via the Black Rock Forest [website](#) by 5:00 PM EST on Monday January 29, 2024.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Communication with BRF staff prior to proposal preparation may help determine if the proposed project is appropriate. Proposals should be submitted directly through the Black Rock Forest [website](#), exclusive of letters of support which should be emailed directly to the Research Manager (kterlizzi@blackrockforest.org). A reply email will be returned to the PI indicating receipt of the application. Applications that are incomplete after the deadline will not be reviewed.

Proposals must contain:

- **Cover Sheet:** This is the fillable form on the website. Provide a short descriptive title (< 200 characters). On the form, check all boxes that apply. If a research project involves human subjects, you will be required to conform to guidelines established by the NIH and NSF regarding consent forms and the rights, privacy, and welfare of your subjects. If your project involves vertebrate animals, you are required to adhere to your institution's animal welfare guidelines as set forth by NIH and NSF. Research involving protected species must conform

to State and Federal regulations. Copies of institutional or government approval (e.g., IAUCUC approval, collecting permits, etc.) must be given to Black Rock Forest before the permitted activities may commence.

- **Project Description:** The project description is limited to a maximum of six single-spaced pages (exclusive of Literature Cited) with one-inch margins and 12-point, standard font. The **Introduction** should state the problem, the questions, or the hypotheses to be tested and the project's conservation relevance. Specific objectives for the period of support should be listed. Background material should place the project in perspective and include a brief review of relevant literature. The **Research Design** section should present descriptions of proposed research including the procedures to be used in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess feasibility. Special emphasis should be placed on work to be conducted within Black Rock Forest, including lab space requirements and duration. Schematics and or figures for sampling or surveying plots, transects, etc. are encouraged when appropriate. Provide a list of expected **project deliverables**, including data sets, maps, manuscripts, etc. Provide an **approximate schedule** for the stages of the project and plans for removal of equipment from the Forest at the end of the project. **Literature Cited** should be the last section of the project description. The project description should be attached to the application on the website.
- **Proposed Budget:** The following budget categories must be included when applicable: personnel, equipment and supplies, travel, lodging, and other expenses (e.g., lab processing fees). Please contact the BRF Research Manager with allowable expense questions.
- **Budget Justification:** Specify the reasons for the funds requested. If funds are being used for student or consultant stipends, a clear contingency must be stated in the event of a change in personnel or relationship. Requests for equipment costing >\$1500 require manufacturer, model number, and web link with the need for the requested model clearly explained. Briefly describe expendable supplies requested. Unless well justified, requests for computers or computer upgrades are not allowed. Unless otherwise stipulated in the award letter, equipment purchased will become the property of BRF at the end of the grant period.
- **Funds Administration:** Proposals must state intended plans for managing grant funds if awarded. BRF recommends one of the following options:
 1. *Institution Administration:* Black Rock Forest will provide a payment for the full award amount to the investigator's institution. The institution will distribute funds as described in the proposed budget.
 2. *Principal Investigator Administration:* Black Rock Forest will provide a payment for the full amount of the award to the investigator. If awarded, the Investigator will be required to fill in a W9 and be issued a 1099-misc for tax purposes.
 3. *Black Rock Forest Administration:* Black Rock Forest will purchase equipment, lodging, or supplies as directed by the investigator. If awarded, details for all purchases will be required (e.g., receipts), any salary payments will require a W9 and the individual will be issued a 1099-misc for tax purposes.

Each option will require the PI to provide routing and account information for any transfer of funds, be it to the institution or individuals. More details on account transfers and funds administration will be communicated if the project is funded.
- **Acknowledgement of BRF research guidelines:** State that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by the BRF Research Code and Guidelines available on our website and will accompany the award letter.

- **Other Funding:** A list of current awards relevant to the proposed research controlled by the PI, including source, amount and period of support. If there are no current awards, state “None”.
- **List of Prior Black Rock Forest Awards:** A list including a final report, any publications or conference presentations resulting from these awards and the professional outcomes of student participants.
- **Curriculum Vitae:** A short (≤ 2 pages) CV of the PI and of each student investigator participating in the project.
- **Letter(s) of Support:** Applications from graduate students should include a letter of support from the student’s advisor endorsing the proposed research and briefly describing the role the advisor and home institution will provide in supporting that research (e.g., use of laboratory facilities or scientific equipment, expected involvement of the advisor or other collaborators in the proposed research). Letters of support for undergraduate and high school student applications should also include details on how the PI will mentor the student(s) and supervise the research. Any application from an undergraduate or high school student without this letter will not be considered. Questions about the expectations for mentors of undergraduate or high school research can be directed to the Research Manager in advance of submission.

EVALUATION

Each proposal will be judged on the extent to which it reflects a well-conceived design, clearly stated goals, conservation relevance and a reasonable promise of successful completion. Research proposals will be scored as to (1) evidence of scholarly promise/productivity; (2) significance of the project regarding its potential contribution to the field; and (3) evidence of the importance of Black Rock Forest in answering the research questions. Research awards will generally support independent, original projects that will lead to peer-reviewed publication and potential for additional funding from other sources.

The Redden Fund Grant Committee, which consists of representatives from the Forest staff and Consortium partners, will make award decisions. Final decisions will be announced by written notification by March 15, 2024.

REQUIREMENTS AND REPORTS

All projects at Black Rock Forest require prior written approval (see BRF Research Code and Guidelines). Approval of a grant will satisfy this requirement. PIs must submit data, with metadata in appropriate format, within two years of collection. All equipment and materials must be labelled appropriately while in use and removed and properly disposed of at the end of the study. All unspent award funds must be returned to BRF within 90 days of the end of the proposed work. These unspent funds will be returned to the BRF-managed fund that supports this grant program. Substantive changes to either the project design or budget must be approved by BRF in advance. At minimum, all grant recipients are required to present their findings within 2 years of their grant award, either via teleconference or ideally at our biennial research symposium. Working with the BRF communications department to feature their research for public outreach efforts, including social media, website highlights, newsletters, and/or special events is also highly encouraged. We encourage interested recipients to incorporate their work into BRF curriculum and education programs with help from the BRF education department.

Grant administration for successful proposals will be governed by the conditions of a grant letter sent to successful applicants.

At the end of the grant period, the PI must submit a final report within 90 days after the end of their proposed work. The report should briefly present and discuss the results, describe recommendations for future work or revisions to proposed work, and account for expenses. A copy of any publication(s) resulting from the project, including in-house, peer-reviewed, non-peer-reviewed, or popular press, should be submitted as they arise. Publications must contain an acknowledgement of support from the Black Rock Forest David Redden Conservation Science Fund Small Grants Program.